ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL LEADERS OF FACTORS THAT AFFECT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INCLUSION PROCESS IN SELECTED MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

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The purpose of the study was to explore perceptions of school leaders (administrators, teachers, counselors, other) regarding inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom. An additional purpose of the study was to examine the influence of training in inclusion and training in special education on school leaders' perceptions of inclusion.

The sample consisted of 207 middle- and high-school leaders. School leaders completed the *Survey of the Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* (Harris, 1997). The instrument contained 31 statements to which respondents were asked to mark the degree to which they agree or disagree.

The researcher found some unanimity in school leaders' perceptions of factors that affect implementation of inclusion. School leaders had higher levels of agreement with statements regarding social development, student placement, and academic achievement and less agreement with statements pertaining to students' rights and benefits, administrative support for inclusion, and the curriculum. School leaders were more willing to include students with mild disabilities than students with more severe disabilities.

The conclusions drawn suggest that inclusion is the key to making special education and regulation equitable for all students. School systems should not view general education classrooms as the least restrictive environment for all students, regardless of disability and teacher preparation. Inclusion should be based on each student's needs and adequate in-service training designed to prepare teachers for working with students with disabilities.

PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL LEADERS OF FACTORS THAT AFFECT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INCLUSION PROCESS IN SELECTED MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (*Continued*)

TABLE OF CONTENTS (*Continued*)

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF TABLES (*Continued*)

Table Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The foundation of any democratic society, by nature of its character, should produce an educational process that is equal, cooperative, and responsible for preparing its citizenry (disabled and non-disabled) to survive and thrive in the kind of society in which they live. To produce anything less would suggest that our founding fathers held flawed perceptions of true democracy.

Policymakers and courts have spent a large portion of the past decades writing laws and making legal decisions that attempt to compensate for the inequalities that are woven into the fabric of this country. *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954) was an important beginning to remedy certain conditions of inequality in our nation's educational system. This landmark ruling declared that the separate education of African-American students was unequal and ordered schools to desegregate.

In the 21st century, *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954) would become the missile by which full-inclusionists would herald the argument that current practices in special education constitute the moral equivalent to segregation and should be abolished. Full-inclusionists charge that special educational placements are inherently unequal; that is, they stigmatize and create low expectations—first, in the minds of teachers, then in the hearts of students—and reinforce feelings of inferiority, culminating in poor school performance (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995).

Individual states and school systems have spent a vast amount of time and resources debating over best practices for educating all children, specifically those whose mental or physical challenges or both impede, if not limit, their ability to learn. There is substantial disagreement within the special education community concerning whether inclusion should be applied equally across the entire population of students with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Sapon-Shevin, 1996).

Inquiries have been made as to the disadvantages of inclusion on hearing-impaired and learning-disabled children (Baker & Zigmond, 1995; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Zigmond & Baker, 1996). For the purpose of this study, inclusion shall refer to the partial inclusion of students with special needs into regular classroom environments. Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, and Leal (1995) indicated that special education has occurred and is occurring in four consecutive phases: (a) mainstreaming, (b) the regular education initiative, (c) first-generation inclusion, and (d) second-generation inclusion. Generally, mainstreaming refers to the selective placement of special education students in one or more regular education classes. Regular Education Initiative refers to the merger of governance and funding for special education students. First- and second-generation inclusion generally refers to the historical development of inclusion and full inclusion, respectively. In this sense, inclusion expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. Full inclusion means that all students, regardless of handicapping condition or severity, will be in the regular classroom or program full time.

Inclusion has been offered as a viable solution but not fully embraced by educators, especially the school leaders. Prior research has indicated that classroom teachers may be very skeptical of inclusion and that the practice will present inherent problems (D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Van Leeuwen, 1997). Since the passing of Public Law 94-142 *(Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975)* and Public Law 101-476 *(Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990)*, there has been a mandate for eligible students with special needs to be provided with an array of services that will maximize life-long learning in the least restrictive environment. What laws have been unsuccessful in mandating is the ideology of teachers and school leaders whose purpose is to comply with the law and precedent set forth by the governing body of the United States of America.

Inclusive placements rely on the perceptions of successful implementation and skills of general educators as direct service providers, special educators as consultants, and both as interactive and cooperative members of the education team (Mainzer, Mainzer, Slavin, & Lowery, 1993; Marshall & Herrmenn, 1990). Learning environments in which school personnel claim to favor inclusion and visible sign of pullout instruction and separation continue to exist (Brantlinger, 1996). In recognition that school restructuring and reform efforts are time sensitive and have failed to make a significant impact on traditional educational structures and practice, it has been acknowledged that the beliefs of school personnel can be a conservative force that impedes and obstructs change (Cuban, 1988; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Goodlad, 1984, 1988; Sarason, 1990). The

optimal implementation of inclusion, therefore, requires not only a change in school policy, but also a shift in ideology of those who work in schools (Brantlinger, 1996).

The vision of inclusion as a general concept means that all children, regardless of their disability or the severity of the disability, should have access to and participate in their natural communities, those in which they would have participated if no mental or physical challenge existed. For the educational process, this means attending the school and classroom attended by their siblings and neighborhood age-mates who do not have disabilities (Wolery, Werts, Caldwell, Snyder, & Lisowski, 1995).

Inclusion is a term utilized by the education reform movement to change schools' philosophy to all students can learn, even those with mental and physical challenge. The *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (1975) stipulated that all children with disabilities should be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible.

Since the signing of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002), inclusionary practices appear to be a top priority because the law focuses on the progress of all children. The *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* does not differentiate students based on race, socioeconomic status, religion, or exceptionality. Its premise has changed the role of the federal government in elementary and secondary education by suggesting that schools describe their success in terms of what each student accomplishes. The act contains four basic education reform principles: (a) stronger accountability for results, (b) increased flexibility and local control, (c) expanded options for parents, and (d) an emphasis on teaching methods that have proven to work. According to this act, the government is

placing great efforts to educate all its citizens. This initiative should strengthen educators' commitment to the profession by allowing them autonomy to teach all children the best way they know how.

Civil history foretells that laws are only as effective as those who abide by them. Rightly so, the implementation of inclusion is only as effective as the teachers who embrace and embellish the policies, philosophies, and pedagogy that inclusion was designed to address. The investigation of best practices for inclusion begins with an intense examination of the perceptions of those responsible for its implementation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore perceptions of school leaders (administrators, teachers, counselors, other) regarding inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom. An additional purpose of the study was to examine the influence of training in inclusion and training in special education on school leaders' perceptions of inclusion.

Background of the Problem

Countless Americans suffer from one or more physical or mental disabilities, and the number is expected to increase as our society ages. Until recently, these individuals often were removed or segregated from the mainstream of society. In spite of laws designed to correct this situation, many forms of discrimination occurred both in our schools and in our society. It is a commonly held opinion that educators must acquire a positive attitude towards the education of students with disabilities and special needs. Accardo and Williams (1996) and Snell (1993) concluded that definitions of disabilities

provide the basis from which identification practices evolve and reflect changing social attitudes, values, and adverse circumstances that may be temporary, permanent, reversible, irreversible, progressive, or regressive. According to Howard, Williams, Port, and Lepper (1997), the term special needs children indicates that special needs children and youth are identified as low birth weight at infancy, difficult temperament, presence of challenging aggressive behavior, cognitive deficits, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment. Inclusive placement relies on the attitudes and skills of general educators as direct service providers, special educators as consultants and both as interactive and cooperative members of the education team (Mainzer et al., 1993; Marshall & Herrmann, 1990). Concerns have been raised on several issues as more at-risk students, as well as students with special education needs, attend general education classrooms. Often, the return of children with disabilities appears to not only alter the classroom teacher's roles and responsibilities, but also that of the school leaders who supervise them by individualizing the instructional program more than the educators have been prepared to implement (Evans, 1990). Thus, the movement towards inclusive placements for more children with disabilities will require different roles for all educators. The ability to individualize instruction, to adopt role release behavior, to feel confident enough to ask for help, to acknowledge diversity as a desirable component of a classroom or school environment, and to identify strengths in all students are only a few of the changes that all educators must adopt (Mainzer et al., 1993).

Statement of the Problem

The passage of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975* (P. L. 94-142) and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) amended in 1990 (P. L. 101-476), and the reauthorization of *IDEA* (1997) mandated that eligible students with special needs be provided with an array of services at the site they would attend if they did not have special needs and that this must be in the least restrictive environment. The main concern of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975* was to ensure that schools provide an appropriate education for all students with disabilities regardless of the type or the severity of the disability. Anderson and Antonak (1992) warned that total acceptance of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom will happen only after long-term modification of attitudes. Serving all students in the general education classroom is a major concern in districts across the country and many changes have occurred in special education, and specifically, as a result of legislation. Investigating school leaders' attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion of students with disabilities is crucial to meeting the educational needs for these students. Therefore, this study investigated the impact of school leaders' perceptions toward inclusive education and the practices implemented to support educating students with special needs in the regular classroom.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are school leaders' opinions concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process as suggested in the current literature?

2. What are school leaders' perceptions of inclusion relative to student rights and benefits, administrative support, curriculum, social development, academic achievement, and student placement?
3. Is there a significant relationship between school leaders' training in special education and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process?
4. Is there a significant relationship between school leaders' training in inclusion and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process?

Significance of the Study

The inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools and classrooms has been the dominant discourse among educators since the passage of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (1975). Yet, 30 years later, inclusion has not become a reality in many schools nationally. Even in situations in which school personnel claim to favor inclusion, various signs of pullout and separation continue to exist (Brantlinger, 1996). In recognition of the reality that school restructuring and reform efforts repeatedly failed to have significant impact on traditional school structures and practices regarding special education, it has been acknowledged that the beliefs of school personnel can be a conservative force that impedes and obstructs change (Cuban, 1988; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Sarason, 1990).

The optimal implementation of inclusion, therefore, requires not only a change in school policy but also a change in the beliefs of those who work in schools (Brantlinger,

1996). Justification for full inclusion has been researched by Salisbury, Palmombaro, and Long (1993) and Hanline (1993). They concluded that the practice of full inclusion can be justified if social, ethical, legal, and physical conditions are identified and properly assessed. Their research supported the notion that facilitated full inclusion models lead to higher frequency of interaction that enhanced the development of adaptive and social skills of children and youth with disabilities. Howard et al. (1996) indicated that preschoolers with special need or disabilities enrolled in inclusive programs had peers that were more accepting of them than when they reached the self-contained classes in the middle grades. School leaders' attitude and perceptions can determine the success or failure of an inclusive program at all grade levels. Shaping attitude and perceptions from negative to positive and ensuring that inclusive practice are being conducted are among the major tasks that school leaders must perform. In order for inclusion to be effective, it is generally agreed that all school personnel must be receptive to its principles and demands. This receptiveness has to start at the top. Thus, school leaders must provide the support and training to ensure that best practices regarding inclusion are being implemented in the regular classroom. Evidence supports the assertion that substantive change initiatives must be supported by both school leaders and teachers (Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Glickman, 1993, 1998; Maeroff, 1988; Schlechty, 1990). As described by Joseph Blasé and Peggy Kirby (2000), those who work with students on a daily basis, particularly teachers, must be involved in substantive decisions regarding changes that affect their day to day lives. However, the role of school leaders is important; it requires titular and conceptual leaders. According to Marzano (2003), no one other than the

school leader can easily assume the role of visible head of a reform effort. Unfortunately, this is because of the egalitarian culture of schools in which all teachers are considered equal regardless of their expertise or performance. Attempts by a teacher or group of teachers to lead a reform effort are often met with resistance (Feiman- Nemser, & Floden, 1984; Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989). Therefore, it is extremely important that school leaders not only have an optimistic perception of inclusion but also ensure that practices that support inclusion are implemented.

Federal legislation (i.e., *No Child Left Behind Act*) and state-mandated test requirements (i.e., Georgia *Criterion Referenced-Competency Tests*, Georgia *High School Graduation Tests*) now require that all children regardless of their enrollment in regular or special education programs meet the same standards for promotion or graduation or both. District leaders stress to its schools to "raise the ceiling as well as the floor" and the potential to increase awareness among school leaders regarding the perceptions and practices as they relate to educating their entire school population justify the significance of this study.

Summary

This chapter introduced the problem of including students with disabilities into the regular classroom and factors that affect full implementation of inclusion and described the background to the problem. The purpose of the study was to explore school leaders' perceptions of factors that affect full implementation of inclusion. Four research questions were posed that guided this research project.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In 1975, Congress enacted the federal special education law that governed how students with disabilities are educated in today's schools–*Education of All Handicapped Children Act*, also known as Public Law (PL) 94-142. Since then, Congress has amended the law several times, most recently in 1997. When Congress amended the act in 1990, it renamed it. The federal law is now named the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). *IDEA*, also known as Public Law (PL) 105-17, was reauthorized in 1997. The act mandates that students with special needs be provided and given the opportunity to engage in the same services as regular education students in the least restrictive environment and under the supervision of regular teachers.

The laws unequivocally protect the right of special education students and outline the responsibilities of the educational providers for these students. They also detail requirements that may reduce the amount of time available for instruction. The challenge is to strike a balance between ensuring procedural safeguards and providing instruction that accommodates the unique learning needs of each student. *IDEA* guarantees that all children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate education which emphasizes (a) special education and related services designed to meet their needs, (b)

the right of law, (c) protection in the process of evaluation, and (d) an individualized educational program.

There are 10 categories of disabilities under *IDEA* (1997): (a) specific learning disabilities, (b) emotional disturbance, (c) mental retardation, including severe and multiple disabilities; (d) autism, (e) other health impairments, (f) orthopedic impairments, (g) traumatic brain injury, (h) speech or language impairments, (i) hearing impairments, including deafness; and (j) visual impairments, including blindness. *IDEA* sets out six principles for the education of students with disabilities. First, schools must enroll the students (zero reject). Second, schools must provide a nondiscriminatory evaluation (a rule of fair assessment). Third, schools must provide an appropriate education (a rule of individualized benefit). Fourth, schools must provide educational services in the least restrictive environment (LRE)–a presumption in favor of placement in typical programs. Fifth, schools must provide procedural due process (a rule of fair dealing and accountability). Finally, parents have opportunities to participate with the school in making decisions about the education of their child (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Leal, 1999).

Special Education Legislation and Litigation

The passage of Public Law (PL) 94-142, which guaranteed every child with a disability a free and appropriate education, made a major impact in education second only to *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954). The *Brown* decision was the precedent for much of the special education related legislation and litigation (Salend, 1998).

The Supreme Court based its decision on the 14th amendment of the United States Constitution. This amendment prohibits state from denying any person within their respective jurisdiction the equal protection of the law or from taking life, liberty, or property without due process of law. This "separate but equal" doctrine was used by the parents of children with disabilities to argue the same principle of equal access should apply to their children. This brought about a number of court cases that helped shaped Congressional acts.

In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that separate is not equal. The ruling challenged exclusionary educational policies for African Americans and led the way towards increased scrutiny of the segregation of students with disabilities. *Brown* held that schools may not segregate by race; schools also may not segregate or otherwise discriminate by ability and disability. Students are students regardless of their race or disability.

During the 1950s and 1960s, advocates for students with disabilities founded organizations such as the National Association for Retarded Children and initiated advocacy action, claiming that exclusion and misclassifications violated the students' rights under the U.S. Constitution. Two revolutionary judicial decisions followed in the 1970s. In 1972, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) filed suit against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on behalf of all retarded children between the ages of 3 and 21 who were excluded from school. The class action suit resulted in an agreement that stated that all students with mental retardation had a right to a public education and that placement in a general education setting was preferable to segregated

placements. It also stated that parents had a right to be informed of any change in their child's education program. In the 1972 court case *Mills v. Washington, DC Board of Education*, the right to a free education was extended to all students with disabilities (Salend, 1998).

In 1972, a civil action was initiated on behalf of seven children of school age who were excluded from the District of Columbia Public Schools and denied a publicly supported education. This suit, known as *Mills v. DC Board of Education*, compelled the system to provide them with immediate and adequate education and educational facilities in the public schools or alternate placement at public expense. The plaintiffs were awarded (a) the right to attend public school, (b) a free and suitable publicly supported education regardless of the degree or the child's mental, physical, or emotional disability or impairment, and (c) the right not to be suspended from the public schools for disciplinary reasons for any period in excess of two days without affording him or her a hearing.

The federal courts ordered the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia to (a) provide a free and appropriate education to all students with disabilities, (b) educate students with disabilities in the same schools and basically the same programs as students without disabilities, and (c) implement procedural safeguards such that students with disabilities can challenge non-complying schools (*Mills v. Washington, DC Board of Education*, 1972; *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens [PAR] v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1972).

In 1974, the Supreme Court decision in *Lau v. Nichols* contended that the San Francisco School System was in violation of Section 601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by not providing special English instruction to the approximately 1,800 Chinese students in the San Francisco School System who spoke little or no English. Three cases in 1979, *Central York District v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Education, Larry P. v. Riles,* and *Armstrong v. Kline* all protected the rights of American children.

In *Larry P. v Riles*, the court ruled that standardized IQ tests cannot be used as the sole basis for placing children in special education. The *Central York District v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Education* case brought about a ruling that school districts must provide services for gifted and talented children whether or not advance guarantee of reimbursement from the state has been received. The *Armstrong v. Kline* case established the right of some children with severe handicaps to an extension of the 180-day school year (Heward & Orlansky, 1992).

Several other landmark Supreme Court cases have clarified or interpreted *IDEA* (1990, 1997). One other concerning the discipline of special education students is *Horning v. Doe* (1988). In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that children whose misbehavior is related to their disability cannot be excluded from school.

In *Horning v. Doe* (1988), a California school district had expelled students who had learning disabilities and mental retardation for spiking the punch at a school dance. The U.S. Supreme Court held that, if a student's behavior arises out of the student's disability, *IDEA* prohibits the district from excluding him or her from school. In essence, courts have ordered schools not to expel or suspend student whose behavior is caused by

their disabilities. However, education services could cease if the misbehavior is not related to the disability (Smith, 1998).

From these court cases and others not discussed in this study, several provisions were outlined under *IDEA* (1990, 1997). The first of the legal requirements (relevant to this study) was the provision of a free appropriate education or FAPE. This requirement states that the individual will receive an appropriate education at no cost to the parent or student. This appropriate education is to include all related services needed by individual with disabilities. Related services include physical therapy, speech therapy, audiology for the hearing impaired, transportation, etc.

The second provision is parental notification and procedural rights. During the referral process through the evaluation process, or from the beginning to the end, parents must be notified of decisions made regarding the student with disabilities. The parents have the right to object or consent to any decision made concerning the student. The parents also have the right to view the child's records. If the parents disagree with the services provided, they have the right to a due process hearing.

Assessments must not be discriminatory and must be individualized. From these assessments, the individual with a disability can be identified for special related services. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan that the child's special education teacher, a regular education teacher, the parents, and the student develop. This plan outlines the instructional needs of the child with disabilities for the year. It also includes a discipline plan. The IEP must be updated yearly.

To the greatest extent appropriate, children with disabilities should be educated with those who do not have disabilities. They should be placed in as normal a school setting as possible unless the disability is too severe for a general classroom setting (Osborne & Dimattia, 1994).

In 1997, reauthorization of *IDEA* occurred. This reauthorization expanded the special education age range. Public Law (PL) 99-457, the first reauthorization in 1986, added from birth to three years old. It also provided individualized family services plans (IFSPs) and suggested individualized transition plans (ITPs). The second reauthorization, PL 101-476, added traumatic brain injury and autism to *IDEA* and stated that transition plans must be done by the age of 16.

The 1997 *IDEA* reauthorization states that parents are to work with school districts before making private school placements. Recent court cases, such as *Burlington School Committee v. Massachusetts Department of Education* and *Florence County School District Four v. Carter*, have ruled in favor of the parent if the school is found negligent in the educational plan for the student.

One area that has brought about much controversy is the discipline procedures when dealing with students with special needs. A manifestation of disability determination is now required before discipline is administered. This provision prohibits expulsion if the infraction is a result of the disabling condition. However, the reauthorization states that there will be alternative placement for those individuals that cannot stay in the school setting with no cessation of services.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (which in 1990 became the *Americans with Disabilities Act* under the Bush administration) requires that no individual with a handicap be excluded from participation in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Court cases emerging from this act indicated that reasonable accommodations must be provided to meet the nondiscrimination standard. Salend (1998) states that because Section 504 is based on a broader definition of disabilities than those covered under *IDEA* (1990), the number of children who qualify for services under 504 is significantly larger than those students eligible for special education services under *IDEA*. Section 504 provides for those individuals who need special services and are not covered under *IDEA*. This includes students with AIDS, asthma, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The *Americans with Disabilities Act* (1990) stated that the workplace, transportation, telecommunications, etc. must be made handicapped accessible. The *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) forced businesses to install ramps, elevators, and items that would make all aspects of a person with disabilities life as normal as possible.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Section 504 is an amendment to the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides that no otherwise qualified individual shall, solely by reasons of his or her disability be discriminated against in certain realms of American life. Section 504 applies to any program or activity receiving federal assistance.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and ADA define a person with a disability as one who (a) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individuals (e.g., traumatic brain injury), (b) has a record of such an impairment (history of cancer that is now in remission), (c) is regarded as having such an impairment (a person who is "wonkish" or especially creative may be regarded as having some emotional disturbance) (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Leal, 1995).

To comply with these laws, states offer 504 or ADA plans. A team from each school, which may include the student's teacher, the principal or principal' designee, and someone who is knowledgeable about the disability, decides what accommodations are necessary, based on limitations resulting from the disability (Fossey, Hosie, & Zirkel, 1995).

Schools now employ educational support (student study and pre-assessment and referral) teams. The teams identify specific problems that students are experiencing and help teachers establish instructional and behavioral programs for children with learning or behavioral problems within general education classrooms.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

On December 3, 2004, the President signed into law Pub. L. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004*, amending the *IDEA*. The law authorizes significant additional spending from $12.4 billion authorized in 2005 to $26.1 billion by 2011. *IDEIA* governs the educational experience of 6.7 million students with identified physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. The new

version makes changes large and small in virtually every aspect of special education, from discipline and assessment to teacher qualifications and professional development. Phillips (2004) highlighted the following aspects of the bill:

1. A renewed commitment—but not a guarantee—to fund 40% of the costs of special education by 2011.
2. A compromise on the contentious issue of discipline.
3. Alignment with No Child Left Behind requirements, including those on teacher qualifications and assessments of student progress.
4. New attention to early identification of children with learning disabilities.
5. Provisions allowing states to spend up to 15% of IDEA funds on other educational programs. (p. 2)

Inclusion and Academic Achievement

Research findings suggest there is really no difference in academic achievement levels for special-needs students when they are included in the regular classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Cole, Waldron, and Majd (2004) investigated the effects of inclusive school settings for students in six Indiana school corporations. Results revealed that students with disabilities educated in inclusive settings made significantly greater academic progress in reading and mathematics. For students without disabilities, there were no significant differences in reading and mathematics achievement across the comparison groups. However, a review of group means and the percentage making comparable or greater than average academic progress when compared to students with disabilities indicate a pattern in favor of inclusive settings. The academic progress of students with learning disabilities and mild handicaps also supported inclusive education.

Affleck, Madge, Adams, and Lowenbraun (1988) found no significant differences between the performance of students without disabilities placed in integrated and

mainstream education programs. This finding suggests that normally achieving students are not adversely affected by being placed with students with learning disabilities.

An exploratory study was conducted to evaluate the impact of inclusive educational programs on the achievement of students with developmental disabilities and disabilities and their peers without disabilities. The achievement of 324 students without disabilities enrolled in inclusive classes with students with developmental disabilities was compared with 221 students without disabilities whose classes did not include students with developmental disabilities using a posttest only control group design. The academic achievement of these students was measured using mandated state-level criterion-referenced tests in reading/language arts and mathematics. Results of the tests indicated that students with developmental disabilities made statistically significant gains in adaptive behavior. Results of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated no significant differences in the academic performance in reading/language arts and mathematics of students without disabilities enrolled in inclusive classes and those who were not (McDowell, Thorson, Disher, Mathot-Bucker, Mendal, & Ray, 2003).

Halvorson and Sailor (1990) reviewed 21 studies that compared special-needs students in integrated placements with their peers in segregated placements. They concluded that students in the integrated placements reduced inappropriate behaviors more often, increased communication skills, exhibited greater independence, and engendered higher parental expectations.

Meloy, Deveille, and Frisbie (2002) examined the effects of a read aloud testing accommodation on students with and without a learning disability in reading in an

inclusive setting. A sample of 260 mid-western middle school students was randomly assigned to two experimental conditions for testing with four tests of the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* (ITBS). The test conditions were standard administration and reading the tests aloud to students. Based on a two-way analysis of variance, with test administration and student status as the two fixed factors, the students with learning disabilities in reading, as well as those without, exhibited statistically significant gains with the read aloud test administration. Interaction effects were not significant. Koertz (1997) also found that students with learning disabilities given a read aloud accommodation achieved higher scores on the Kentucky State Assessment than students with learning disabilities who were administered the test under standard conditions.

Daniel and King (1997) studied the effects of students' placement versus non-placement in an inclusive classroom. This was determined in four sets of variables: parents' concerns about their children's school programs, teacher- and parent-reported instances of students' behaviors, students' academic performance, and students' self-reported self-esteem. Some of the discriminant analysis results indicated that parents of students in inclusion classes were more likely to experience gains in reading scores but no big difference for mathematics, language, and spelling. The third-grade students in inclusive classrooms experienced higher gains in reading scores than students in non-inclusive classrooms, but the fourth-grade inclusion students had smaller gains in mathematics. The results indicated that consistent academic gains do not appear to be an advantage of students' participation in an inclusive classroom.

As evidenced by these studies, inclusion enhances the education of students with and without disabilities. Autin (1992) showed that comprehensive inclusion presents the best alternative to segregated special education.

Attitudes and Inclusion

The degree to which special and general education teachers are prepared to work in inclusive settings greatly determines the ultimate success of inclusive programs (Baker & Zigmond, 1995; Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998; Treder, Morse, & Ferron, 2000). The push for full inclusion has come from school administrators and parents rather than teachers (Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Lieberman, 1985; Webber, 1994). Because of teachers' lack of involvement in determining who is placed in the general education classroom, many teachers have resisted inclusive placements (Buysse, Keyes, & Bailey, 1996; Florian, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Heflin & Bullock, 1999).

In a qualitative study to discern attitudes and concerns of general educators, Snyder (1999) found teachers felt that general educators did not receive adequate training to cope with special needs students in the inclusive classroom. He also found general educators felt they were not supported by special education teachers. Additionally, general educators felt they needed more training support from the administration.

A number of researchers have explored teachers' attitudes about inclusion. General education teachers have been found to prefer the pullout model that provides remedial instruction to students with disabilities in a segregated setting (Coates, 1989; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991). In a synthesis of 28 previous surveys of general education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996)

found that the majority of regular education teachers supported inclusion. However, few teachers were receptive to having special needs students in their own classrooms. Their research indicated that teachers' attitudes had changed very little, if any, during the survey period, 1958 to 1995. Overall, about two thirds of the teachers surveyed accepted the general idea of teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms, with a little more than half expressing a willingness to do so. About half agreed that such practice was beneficial to students. However, these proportions declined substantially when participating teachers were asked about full-time inclusion, including students with more severe or intellectual or behavioral disabilities, or making substantial changes in their classroom routines to accommodate students with disabilities.

Teachers appeared to be more receptive to students with mild-to-moderate disabilities over students with more severe disabilities (Buysse, Wesley, Keyes, & Bailey, 1996; Center & Ward, 1987; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Teachers' less favorable attitudes were influenced by a number of factors to include additional time requirements (Houk & Rogers, 1994; Jallad, Slusher, & Saumell, 1996), additional time and increased emphasis on student achievement (Lewis & Doorlag, 1999; Myles & Simpson, 1989), and meeting the unique and special needs of students with disabilities in addition to meeting the instructional needs of non-disabled students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).

Cornoldi, Tressini, Scrugg, and Mastropieri (1991) surveyed over 500 teachers in Italy, where nationally mandated full inclusion has been practiced for over 20 years. Teachers cannot have more than one student with a disability—not counting learning disabilities—in each class. If they have a student with a disability, they cannot have

more than 20 students in all. About 75% of teachers in Italy indicated support for and willingness to participate in inclusion. However, an even smaller percentage of these teachers felt they had sufficient time, training, or assistance to carry out inclusion mandates.

Bear, Deemer, Griffin, and Minke (1996) conducted a major study where teachers completed a survey of attitudes toward several basic assumptions regarding inclusion of students with mild disabilities, perceptions of self-efficacy, competency, teaching satisfaction, and judgments of the appropriateness of classroom adaptations. Respondents included 185 regular education teachers in traditional classrooms and 71 regular education and 54 special education teachers who co-taught children in inclusive settings. Special education teachers held the most positive views of inclusion, as well as the highest perception of self-efficacy, competency, and satisfaction.

In the same study, regular education teachers in the inclusive classrooms tended to report views similar to those of their special education counterparts. Regular classroom teachers in traditional classrooms held the least positive perceptions in these areas and viewed classroom adaptations as less feasible and less frequently used than did teachers in those classrooms in which the protected resource of two teachers was provided. Teachers in all three groups indicated a need for additional resources in order to appropriately serve children with disabilities.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Inclusion

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* introduced many changes in education designed to improve student academic achievement. These changes have greatly affected

how the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997* (IDEA) is conveyed within the school system. *NCLB* includes students with disabilities in all its mandates–notably statewide assessments, annual progress reports, and the requirement that every child is entitled to a qualified teacher.

NCLB provides the framework for assessment measures that apply to disabled and non-disabled students. General education and special education converge. In all school districts, 95% of students with disabilities are required to participate in state assessments with appropriate accommodations. State and federally mandated instruments, often criterion-referenced tests, are designed to provide information on explicit skills possessed by the student.

Inclusion Research

Slavin (1987, 1990) demonstrated that students with special needs improved their social interaction and academic performance in inclusive settings. Idol and West (1991) reported that students with special needs in the regular education settings required collaboration on the part of all persons who served the students. Davis (1989) reported that if inclusion is to be implemented successfully, it must become integrated into the entire educational system to meet the diverse needs of all students.

In a study to compare the effectiveness of the inclusion model for students with special needs on the elementary level, Waldron and McLeskey (1998) found that students with learning disabilities involved in Inclusive School Programs (ISP) made more gains than their non-ISP counterparts. Students with severe learning disabilities, however, did not perform as well in ISP settings. The progress of students with learning disabilities

and severe learning disabilities was measured using the *Basic Academic Skill Samples* (BASS) system to assess reading and mathematics.

Training

School administrator need to take a more active role in providing continuing staff development and in-service training and to actively encourage collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers (Snyder, 1999). Research implies that training for general education and special education teachers is necessary to address areas that contribute to successful inclusion. Some of these areas include collaboration, consensus building, and knowledge of different methodologies, adaptations, and modifications for students with disabilities (Reisberg, 1998).

Literature pertaining to the effects of training teachers to work with exceptional student indicates that the number and type of courses taken by special education and general education teachers influence their acceptance of inclusion. Research indicates that regular and special education teachers who have undergone training that offers both coursework and practicum in special education tend to implement inclusive programs more effectively. As training in special education increases, the teacher's willingness to teach students with disabilities increases (Bradley & West, 1994; Hill, 1999; McLeskey, Henry, & Hodges, 1998; Peterson & Beloin, 1998; and York & Vandercook, 1990).

The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development mandate stipulated under *IDEA* requires states to develop and implement a comprehensive system of personnel development that is designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified special and regular education teachers and related service personnel. Each state is expected to design

and carry out a plan that is aimed towards organizing and promoting recruiting efforts and preparing and retraining qualified personnel. Procedures may include providing in-service training for regular and special education and related service personnel, disseminating knowledge secured from educational research, and adopting promising practices, material, or technology (IDEA Regulations, C.F.R. § 380).

Teacher education programs are in a position to ensure that pre-service teachers acquire the knowledge, dispositions, and performances required to succeed in educating students with disabilities before they get to the classroom. Moreover, special education standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) state that professional education programs should prepare all school personnel to contribute to the education of exceptional learners (Taylor, Smiley, & Ramasamy, 2003). However, requirements for coursework in special education for those planning to teach in general education vary by state, and sometimes within states for elementary and secondary programs.

A study by Baines, Baines, and Meterson (1994) concluded that postsecondary education does not provide adequate coursework and field experiences in preparation for integrated or mainstreamed classroom settings. According to Sack (1998), prospective general education teachers take only one course in special education. These classes provide only an overview of disabilities. General education teachers often do not gain even basic knowledge of disabilities, other disabilities they are likely to confront, and interventions for behavioral problems. Teachers must also be knowledgeable of the special education laws, legislation, and litigation. Although special education teachers

are more knowledgeable of the laws, legislation, and litigation, difficulty meeting student needs and instructional objective could lead to court cases. The concern indicates a need for ongoing professional training and development (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997).

Summary

The number of children with disabilities in the regular classroom will increase over the next few years (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). This increase is attributed to two interrelated reform efforts in special education: the Regular Education Initiative (e.g., Will, 1986) and full inclusion (e.g., Stainback & Stainback, 1991).

If schools are going to include all students effectively in all classrooms, administrators, teachers, parents, and students must become part of a learning community that recognizes each adult's and each learner's unique gifts. Participants in a learning community must view relationships as reciprocal as well as supportive, and the focus must be on empowering individuals to seek assistance when needed and provide assistance to each other (Stainback & Stainback, 1994).

Successful inclusive programs require total support from teachers, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders providing services to students with special needs. School leaders, particularly administrators, need to help promote the schools' goals for implementing inclusion by helping secure support services, supplies, and resources necessary for inclusive programs. Teachers need to collaborate with other professionals providing services to students educated in inclusive settings. The greater our inclusion of diversity becomes, the richer our capacity grows to create new visions of our schools and ultimately our communities.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The inclusive school movement of the 1990s intensified the call for the increased integration of regular and special education students. Gartner and Lipsky (1987), Stainback and Stainback (1992) and Taylor (1988) are among those whose ideas have been most influential. Treatment and education of students with disabilities has progressed from persecution in ancient civilizations to today's beliefs that all students should be given opportunities for full participation in educational programs. In a study of the development and implementation of inclusive education programs, Power-deFur and Orelove (1993) predicted the following: (a) There would be an increasing movement toward inclusion, and (b) an increasing number of schools will change the question of "whether to include" to "how to include" special education students in the classroom.

Haring and McCormick (1994) defined inclusive education as placing all students with disabilities in regular classrooms in their neighborhood schools, thus eliminating the need for special education schools. They contended that mainstreaming or integrated placements is significantly different since students with disabilities spend part of the school day in regular class and part in a special education class or resource room. Inclusive schools allow students with disabilities to be in their home school with a teacher and an interdisciplinary team.

Other authors claim that, although federal law (P. L. 94-142) sought to bring students with disabilities into the mainstream, the services that support these students are part of a dual system of regular and special education that, absent collaboration and administrative support, perpetuates segregation of students with disabilities from their non-disabled peers.

Some advocates call for "full inclusion," placing all students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Others support the creation of inclusive schools that welcome students with disabilities while holding that for some students, general education placement may not be the best educational option.

This study investigated the impact of school leaders' perceptions upon their practices toward the inclusion of students with special needs into the regular classroom. The term inclusion refers to the commitment to educate each child to the maximum extent appropriate in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students).

Since passing the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990,* there has been a mandate for eligible students with special needs to be provided with an array of services that will maximize lifelong learning in the least restrictive environment. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) does not differentiate students based on race, socioeconomic status, religion, or exceptionality. Furthermore, its premise and four principles suggest that

students with special needs should and must be included into the regular classroom instructional setting in order for these students to fair well on standardized tests since their results will be counted with the regular population's scores. *NCLB* does not make special accommodations for students with special needs, which suggests that children with special needs are recipients of the government's efforts to educate all its citizens. Laws such as these have made the inclusion of students with special needs into the regular classroom a dominant discourse among educators generally; even in situations where school personnel claim to favor inclusion, various signs of pullout and self-contained models still continue to exist (Brantlinger, 1996).

The purpose of the study was to explore perceptions of school leaders (administrators, teachers, counselors, other) regarding inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom. An additional purpose of the study was to examine the influence of training in inclusion and training in special education on school leaders' perceptions of inclusion. A figural representation of the theorized interaction among the variables studied is shown in Figure 1.

Presentation and Definition of Variables

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study is full inclusion. An inclusive classroom educates all students in the mainstream. This means that all students (to include students with learning and physical disabilities, at risk, homeless, and gifted and talented) are included in integrated settings (Choate, 1993).

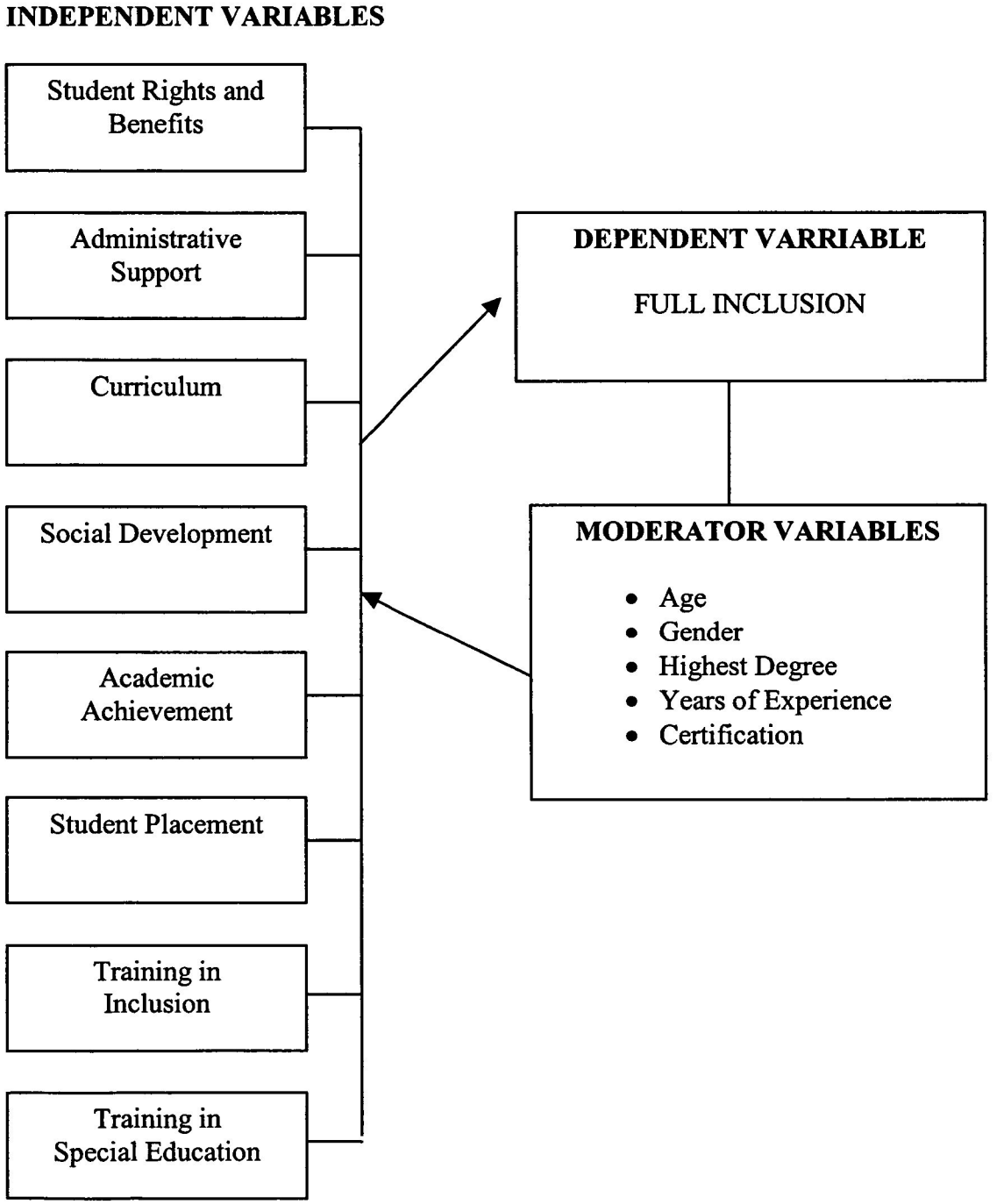

Figure 1. Relationship among the variables.

According to Janney, Snell, and Raines (1995), inclusive education is "the education of children with disabilities together with typically developing peers" (p. 426). A variety of service delivery options ranging from co-located classrooms to full inclusion are considered to be inclusive.

Independent Variable

There are eight independent variables in this study. They include training in special education, training in inclusion, and the six factors (subscales) of the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion.*

Student Rights and Responsibilities. The term refers to the school leaders' responsibility to ensure the rights of students with disabilities under provisions of *IDEA* and Section 504, to include access to a free and appropriate education, continuum of services, and principle of least restrictive environment.

Administrative Support. The term refers to appropriate administrative support from school leaders to include adequate funding, professional development opportunities, training, etc.

Curriculum. The term refers to curricular options (e.g., reduced level of complexity, adherence to same standards and learning goals, individualization) available to students with disabilities.

Social Development. The term refers to the interactions within the classroom that foster growth and development.

Academic Achievement. The term refers to the levels of attainment as evidenced by performance on standardized assessments (e.g., Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests, Georgia Alternate Assessment and Georgia High School Graduation Tests).

Student Placement. The term refers to the placement of students in classroom settings appropriate to their disabilities.

Moderator Variables

Moderator variables in this study were (a) age, (b) gender, (c) years of experience, (d) certification, and (e) highest degree.

Definition of Terms

General education classroom. This term refers to a classroom that educates children with and without disabilities in accordance with state-approved curriculum (Murawski & Swanson, 2001).

Inclusion. The term refers to placing students formerly taught in self-contained special education classrooms into general education classrooms; an educational arrangement in which all students are given the opportunity to participate in general education classes with their typical age peers to the greatest extent possible; the process of integrating students with disabilities into general education classes in order to fulfill the requirement of "least restrictive environment" mandated by Public Law 94-142 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Austin, 2001).

Individualized Education Program (IEP). Document prepared by the multidisciplinary team that specifies a student's level of functioning and needs, the instructional goal and objectives for the student and how they will be evaluated, the

nature and extent of special education and related services to be received, and the initiation date and duration of the services (Friend & Bursuck, 2001).

Least restrictive environment (LRE). LRE requires that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities in public or private institutions or other care facilities shall be educated with students who are not disabled (Choate, 1993).

Mainstreaming. The term refers to the placement of students with disabilities in general education settings when they can meet traditional academic expectations with minimal assistance, or when expectations are not relevant (Friend & Bursuck, 2001).

Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975). All children, regardless of disability, are entitled to a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. The law is also referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Singh, 2002).

Public Law 101-476 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Federal legislation passed in 1990 that updated and extended P. L. 94-142; also called *IDEA* (Friend & Bursuck, 2001).

Special needs students. This term refers to student with learning, physical, emotional, and/or behavioral disabilities receiving services under *IDEA* (Murawski & Swanson, 2001).

Special education training. In this study, special education training refers to obtaining the required certification needed in order to be competent in teaching special education students.

Training in inclusion. In this study, training in inclusion refers to the teaching and learning process that results in the acquisition of knowledge and skills that promote awareness and understanding of students with disabilities and the needs of students who have them.

Null Hypotheses

For the purpose of this study, three null hypotheses were tested. They are as follows:

1. There is no difference between school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) to *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* items.

$H_0 1$: $O_{Agree} = O_{Disagree}$

2. There is no significant relationship between school leaders' training in inclusion and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process.

3. There is no significant relationship between school leaders' training in special education and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process.

Limitations of the Study

1. As this study collected data solely through survey research, it is limited in that self-report responses reflect the attitudes and beliefs of school leaders at one specific point in time.
2. This focused only on perceptions of factors that affect full implementation of inclusion in middle and secondary schools within an urban school district. The

results may not be generalizable to other schools and school districts in other geographic areas.

3. Mail-out questionnaires have limitations that affect sample size (100% return is rarely achieved), response accuracy, (no one to clarify unclear questions), and response clarification (due to the primary selection of fixed versus open-ended response options).

Summary

The assumption in this study was that there are certain factors that school leaders should consider in their decisions relating to the implementation of full inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting. This chapter provided the theoretical framework as the basis for this research. The definitions of variables and terms were given. The null hypotheses and limitations were also presented.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the perceptions of school leaders of factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process in selected public middle and high schools. The study attempted to investigate that objectively. This chapter describes the research design, the population and sample that was selected and surveyed as well as the instrumentation that was used. The data collection and administrative procedures and data analysis procedures conclude the chapter.

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive, non-experimental research design, with a written survey to determine the perceptions of school leaders regarding factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process. Rea and Parker (1992) state:

> If the researcher needs information that is not available elsewhere and if generalization of findings to a larger population is desired, sample survey research is the most appropriate method. Furthermore, survey research can be considered an appropriate technique when enough general information is known or can be conveniently obtained about the subject matter under investigation to formulate specific questions. (p. 3)

A survey design provides a means by which a quantitative description of a vast sample population could be obtained by the researcher. It provides the researcher the opportunity to obtain general findings from a sample population so that conclusions can be made about general attributes of a larger population (Orlich, 1978). Additional

benefits of survey design include speed of data collection and the economy of design (Orlich, 1978). Isaac and Mitchell (1995) noted:

> Surveys are the most widely-used technique in education and the behavioral sciences for the collection of data. They are a means of gathering data that describes the nature and extent of a particular specified set of data ranging from physical counts and frequencies to attitudes and opinions. This information, in turn, can be used to answer questions that have been raised, to solve problems that have been posed or observed, to access needs and set goals, to determine whether or not specific objectives have been met, to establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, to analyze trends across time, and generally to describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context. (p. 136)

Description of the Setting

This study was conducted in a large urban school district in Georgia. The school district has an active enrollment of 51,000 students attending a total of 85 schools: 59 elementary (grades K-5), three of which operate on a year-round calendar while 41 offer extended-day programs; 16 middle (grades 6-8); 10 high (grades 9-12) and 7 charter schools. The school system also operates two alternative schools for middle and high school students, two community schools, and an adult learning center.

Schools within the district are organized into 10 K-12 vertical clusters, composed of one high school and its feeder elementary and middle schools. Each of the alternative schools relates to a high school, while the community schools and adult learning center are extensions of regular high school programs.

Sampling Procedures

The target population for this study was all middle and high school leaders (principals, assistant principals, instructional liaison specialists, counselors) in a single school district. The target population consisted of 111 administrators, 67 teachers, 17

counselors, and 12 other certified teaching staff selected from middle and high schools in the metropolitan area previously identified. This population was randomly selected from 16 middle schools and 10 high schools. For the purpose of this study, grades 6 through 8 were considered middle school level and grades 9 through 12 were considered high school level.

Working with Human Subjects

The public school system in which this study was conducted has in its guidelines that permission must be sought and granted only if the instrument is distributed in its school system. Appropriate administrative approval was secured prior to project initiation. This research was conducted using employees of the school system. Neither the schools not the school district was revealed in the context of the study.

The study involved no danger or risks to the participants in that no deceptive tactics were employed. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary. All potential subjects had the right to refuse participation at any time. Confidentiality of participants was maintained, and no names were attached to the *Survey of the Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion.*

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this research study was *A Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* developed by Lena Colquitte Harris (1997), which focused on perceptions of administrators and teachers of factors that affect implementation of full inclusion at the elementary level. Permission was granted to utilize the questionnaire. According to Fink and Kosecoff (1998), a researcher can

strengthen the reliability and validity of a survey by basing it "on one that someone else has developed and tested" (p. 27).

The *Revised Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* (see Appendix A) was used in the present study to collect data about perceptions of inclusion across six subscales: (a) student rights and benefits, (b) administrative support, (c) curriculum, (d) social development, (e) academic achievement, and (f) student placement. The initial section of the survey was designed to collect demographic and background information about the context in which the remaining questions were answered. Areas completed in the introductory section of the survey included: location of special education classes, related services programs provided at the school and special education programs provided at the school. Additional questions about school leader characteristics included gender, age, years of teaching experience, highest degree, certification, current position, training in special education, and special training in working with the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom.

The instrument contained 32 questions related to inclusion. It used a four-point Likert scale. Statements were given a score of one, two, three or four and corresponded to "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree."

Validity and Reliability

Harris (1997) stated:

> In designing this instrument, the researcher was guided by some basic steps suggested by Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996). These steps are: (1) defining the research objectives, (2) selecting the sample, (3) designing the questionnaire format, (4) pretesting the questionnaire, (5) pre-contacting

the sample, (6) writing a cover letter and distributing the questionnaire, (7) following up with non-respondents, and (8) analyzing the questionnaire data.

The developmental efforts included piloting and pre-testing, establishing face and content validity, and obtaining reliability estimates (item analysis) for each questionnaire item.

For the purpose of this study, the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* was modified to make the instrument more appropriate for the particular sample (school leaders). Alpha coefficients and correlations between items and scale scores were computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results of the reliability analysis are reported in Chapter V.

Overall, the *Revised Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* has adequate internal consistency. Content validity has been established. It is believed that the instrument is adequate in providing information on self-reported attitudes of school leaders toward factors that affect implementation of full inclusion.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission to survey school leaders was requested and obtained from the Department of Research, Planning and Accountability (see Appendix B). Data were collected from middle and high school leaders regarding their perceptions of factors that affect implementation of full inclusion.

The school leaders were identified by the Executive Directors of Schools. During the monthly principals' meeting, the principals were given a pack of materials which included the *Revised Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full*

Inclusion and a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, assuring anonymity and encouraging participation (see Appendix C). The principals were asked to complete the instrument after verbal instructions had been completed. Further, principals were asked to forward additional copies of the packets to leaders within their schools (usually the administrative team which includes assistant principal, instructional liaison specialist, counselor, and other certified personnel) for completion. Attendance is taken at these meetings; those principals not in attendance were sent a packet of materials via the inter-school mail system. School leaders were given two weeks to respond via the inter-school mail. Follow-up telephone calls were made at the end of two weeks.

Administrative Procedure

Initially, permission was obtained from the school district superintendent to survey school leaders within the district. As a school district employee, the researcher had access within the school district. Permission was obtained from Executive Directors of Schools to distribute packets of materials during their monthly principals' meeting. Anonymity was assured and respondents were given the opportunity to indicate if they wished to receive a copy of the summary of the findings.

Statistical Applications

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 11.0 for Windows) was used to analyze data for this study. An alpha level of .05 was used in determining statistical significance. As an initial step in the data analysis, the internal consistency of the study instrument was evaluated by computing a Cronbach coefficient alpha. An item analysis was performed, and the items with the highest item-scale correlations were

chosen to form the final scale. Descriptive analyses, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were used to organize and summarize the data. Figure 2 presents the statistical analyses that were used to test each hypothesis needed to answer the research questions developed for this study.

Tests for Research Questions

The research questions were tested as described below:

Research Question 1 was to report the opinions of school leaders concerning factor that affect implementation of the inclusion process. The One Variable Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test was used to determine the statistical significance of the responses to each item at the .05 level.

Research Question 2 was to report school leaders' perceptions of inclusion relative to student rights and benefits, administrative support, curriculum, social development, academic achievement, and student placement. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated for the six factors (subscales) of the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion.*

Research Question 3 was to determine if there was a significant relationship between school leaders' training in inclusion and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process. The question was tested using the *t* test for differences in means.

Research Question 4 was to determine if there was a significant relationship between school leaders' training in special education and their attitudes concerning

factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process. The question was tested using the *t* test for differences in means.

Delimitations

1. The scope of the study focused on 16 middle schools and 10 high schools.
2. Perceptions of school leaders regarding inclusion factors were measured by the *Survey of Perceptions of Factor That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion.*
3. The study was limited to a random sample of school leaders employed during the 2004-2005 academic school year.

Summary

This chapter provided specific information on the research design, description of the setting, sampling procedures, working with human subjects, instrumentation, data collection procedures, administrative procedure, statistical applications, and limitations. The primary purpose of the study was to explore perceptions of school leaders (administrators, teachers, counselors, other) regarding inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom. An additional purpose of the study was to examine the influence of training in inclusion and training in special education on school leaders' perceptions of inclusion. The population consisted of 207 school leaders randomly selected from 16 middle schools and 10 high schools. Each participant completed a valid and reliable questionnaire; background variables were also obtained. Descriptive statistics, chi-square, and *t* tests for differences in means were used to analyze the data.

Data analysis, including tables and supporting narratives, are presented in Chapter V. A summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore perceptions of school leaders (administrators, teachers, counselors, other) regarding inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom. An additional purpose of the study was to examine the influence of training in inclusion and training in special education on school leaders' perceptions of inclusion. The statistical analyses reported in this chapter were based on the responses of 207 school leaders to the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion.*

The dependent variables were perceptions of full inclusion as measured by the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion.* The independent variables were training in inclusion and training in special education. Personal characteristics of respondents (i.e., gender, age, years of experience, highest degree, and certification) were also considered independent variables.

The data analysis procedures and results are presented in this chapter. The sections to be included in this chapter are: (a) description of the sample, (b) reliability of the study instrument (c) results of analyses to address research questions and related hypotheses and (d) a summary of the analysis.

Description of the Sample

Respondents to the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* included 207 middle- and high-school leaders. Data collected included: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) years of teaching experience, (d) highest degree, and (e) type of certification.

The first demographic item addressed was gender. Of the respondents to the survey, 116 (56.0%) were females and 91 (44.0%) were males. The data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	116	56.0
Male	91	44.0
Total	207	100.0

The second demographic question asked for the current age of the school leader by the following age groups: (a) 21-25 years, (b) 26-30 years, (c) 31-35 years, (d) 36-40 years, (e) 41-45 years, (f) 46-50 years, (g) 51-55 years, and (h) over 55 years. Twelve (5.8%) respondents were in the 21-25 years of age category; 23 (11.1%) respondents were in the 26-30 years of age category. Twenty-eight (13.5%) respondents were in the 31-35 years of age category; 20 (9.7%) respondents were in the 36-40 years of age category. Fourteen (6.8%) respondents were in the 41-45 years of age category; 35

(16.9%) respondents were in the 46-50 years of age category. Thirty-eight (18.4%) respondents were in the 51-55 years of age category; 37 (17.9%) respondents were in the over 55 years of age category. See Table 2 for a complete summary of these findings.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution by Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
21-25 years	12	5.8
26-30 years	23	11.1
31-35 years	28	13.5
36-40 years	20	9.7
41-45 years	14	6.8
46-50 years	35	16.9
51-55 years	38	18.4
Over 55 years	37	17.9
Total	207	100.0

The third demographic question 3 inquired about years of teaching experience. As shown in Table 3, 19 (9.2%) respondents reported 1-3 years of teaching experience; 28 (13.5%) reported 4-7 years of teaching experience. Thirty-three (15.9%) respondents indicated 8-11 years of teaching experience; 20 (9.7%) respondents indicated 12-15 years of teaching experience. Six (2.9%) respondents reported 16-20 years of teaching experience; 28 (13.5%) respondents reported 21-25 years of teaching experience. Thirty-

seven (17.9%) respondents indicated 26-30 years of teaching experience; 36 (17.4%) indicated over 30 years of teaching experience. See Table 3 for a complete summary of these findings.

Table 3

Frequency by Years of Teaching Experience

Teaching experience	Frequency	Percent
1-3 years	19	9.2
4-7 years	28	13.5
8-11 years	33	15.9
12-15 years	20	9.7
16-20 years	6	2.9
21-25 years	28	13.5
26-30 years	37	17.9
Over 30 years	36	17.4
Total	207	100.0

The fourth demographic item asked respondents to indicate the highest degree attained. The choices were bachelor, master, specialist, and doctorate. Thirty-eight (18.4%) respondents reported bachelor's degree; 45 (21.7%) respondents reported master's degree. Eighty-five (41.1%) respondents reported specialist degree; 39 (18.8%) respondents reported doctorate degree. See Table 4 for a complete summary of these findings.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution by Highest Degree

Highest degree	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor	38	18.4
Master	45	21.7
Specialist	85	41.1
Doctorate	39	18.8
Total	207	100.0

The final demographic item inquired about the type of certification of school leaders. As shown in Table 5, 95 (45.9%) respondents reported certification in educational leadership; 16 (7.7%) respondents reported certification in special education. Twenty-six (12.6%) respondents reported certification in middle-grades education; 24 (11.6%) respondents reported certification in secondary education. Forty-six (33.3%) respondents reported certification in other specializations.

The researcher calculated internal consistency estimates (Gay, 1992). Coefficient alpha was calculated to determine the reliability of the instrument using results from the completed survey. In each dimension (rights and benefits, administrative support, curriculum, social development, academic achievement, and student placement), Cronbach's alpha equaled or exceeded .7 and corrected item-total correlations were positive as shown in Table 6.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution by Type of Certification

Certification	Frequency	Percent
Educational leadership	95	45.9
Special education	16	7.7
Middle-grades education	26	12.6
Secondary education	24	11.6
Other	46	22.2
Total	207	100.0

As a consequence of the reliability analysis, several items (21, 25, 30, 31, and 46) in the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* were deleted. Items which yielded (an *r* of .30) low correlations either with the subscale or with the total were deleted.

Given these results, one can infer that lowest reliable variance of the total scale was at least .66. Gable and Wolf (1993) advise: "Check the alpha reliability noting that you are looking for at least a .70 but would be most pleased with a value greater than .80" (p. 226). The findings indicate that each of the six *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* subscales has adequate internal consistency reliability. Alpha coefficients and correlations between items and scales were computed using version 10.0 of the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS).

Table 6

Reliability Analysis of Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion

Subscale 1: Rights and Benefits		
Item Number	Corrected item-total correlations	Alpha if item deleted
12	.6981	.7077
13	.5370	.7583
14	.5633	.7494
18	.5574	.7549
19	.4969	.7709
N of cases = 190.0		Cronbach's alpha = .7883

Subscale 2: Administrative Support		
Item Number	Corrected item-total correlations	Alpha if item deleted
15	.5630	.6860
16	.6248	.6457
17	.5635	.6864
20	.4549	.7491
N of Cases = 188.0		Cronbach's alpha = .7506

(*table continues*)

Table 6 (*continued*)

Subscale 3: Curriculum		
Item Number	Corrected item-total correlations	Alpha if item deleted
22	.3716	.6308
23	.4641	.5747
26	.3124	.6710
27	.6266	.4336
N of cases = 190.0		Cronbach's alpha = .6767

Subscale 4: Social Development		
Item Number	Corrected item-total correlations	Alpha if item deleted
24	.6195	.
28	.6848	.
N of cases = 195.0		Cronbach's alpha = .8098

Subscale 5: Academic Achievement		
Item Number	Corrected item-total correlations	Alpha if item deleted
25	.7868	.
29	.6925	.
N of cases = 195.0		Cronbach's alpha = .8772

(*table continues*)

Table 6 (*continued*)

Subscale 6: Student Placement		
Item Number	Corrected item-total correlations	Alpha if item deleted
32	.8191	.9645
33	.8486	.9639
34	.8795	.9633
35	.7803	.9651
36	.5075	.9698
37	.8265	.9645
38	.8033	.9647
39	.8362	.9642
40	.8702	.9634
41	.8746	.9636
42	.8719	.9634
43	.8306	.9643
44	.8693	.9635
45	.7953	.9648
47	.5953	.9681
N of cases = 186.0		Cronbach's alpha = .9670

Research Questions

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "What are school leaders' opinions concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process as suggested in the current literature?" Research Question 1 was addressed by testing the following hypothesis:

Null hypothesis 1.

There is no difference between school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) to *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* items.

$H_0 1$: $O_{Agree} = O_{Disagree}$

The findings were tabulated as percentages, and the One Variable Chi Square: Goodness of Fit Test was employed to determine the statistical significance of the responses at the .05 level of confidence. Due to the presence of small cell sizes, data were collapsed to two columns: agree and disagree. From recoded data, a percentage was obtained in order to determine how all the participants responded to each item.

Rights and Benefits of Students

A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) number of school leaders agreed that children with special needs should have the right of access to public education programs, χ^2 (1) = 173.42, $p < .0001$. Also significant (at the .05 level of confidence) were their opinions that children with special needs should be provided with individual services, χ^2 (1) = 151.30, $p < .0001$, and educated in the least restrictive environment, χ^2 (1) = 151.30, $p < .0001$.

A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) number of school leaders believed that students with special needs should be accommodated in a barrier-free environment,

χ^2 (1) = 137.40, $p < .0001$. It was also significant (at the .05 level of confidence) that these respondents thought that students with special needs are able to physically access the environment, χ^2 (1) = 129.74, $p < .0001$. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis of no significant differences in school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) to survey items was rejected with respect to rights and benefits of students.

Administrative Support of Inclusion

A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) number of school leaders believed categorical funding should be utilized to provide services to students with special needs. The number of school leaders believed per-pupil expenditures in the regular classroom should be increased, χ^2 (1) = 134.04, $p < .0001$. A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) of school leaders indicated that a variety of instructional materials are present in the school or classroom or both, χ^2 (1) = 129.74, $p < .0001$. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis of no significant differences in school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) to survey items was rejected with respect to administrative support of inclusion.

Curriculum

A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) number of school leaders believed that a regular classroom at regular complexity, χ^2 (1) = 144.28, $p < .0001$, and reduced levels of complexity, χ^2 (1) = 157.24, $p < .0001$, should be options for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Also significant (at the .05 level of confidence) were their opinions that students with special needs will require most the teacher's attention if placed in the regular classroom, χ^2 (1) = 26.32, $p < .0001$, and significant modifications in regular classroom procedures will be needed to accommodate students with special needs, χ^2 (1) = 63.68, $p < .0001$. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis

of no significant differences in school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) was rejected with respect to curriculum.

Social Development

A majority of school leaders believed students with special needs will be disruptive in regular classrooms, χ^2 (1) = 13.28, p = .0002682, and regular education students will become disruptive if taught in classes with special students, χ^2 (1) = 4.90, p = .0268566. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis of no significant differences in school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) to survey items was rejected. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis of no significant differences in school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) to survey items was rejected with respect to social development.

Academic Achievement

A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) number of school leaders believed students with special needs will experience difficulties in academic achievement if placed in the regular education classroom, χ^2 (1) = 29.62, $p < .0001$, and that regular education students will fall behind academically if taught in classes with students with special needs, χ^2 (1) = 7.32, p = .0068191. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis of no significant differences in school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) to survey items was rejected with respect to academic achievement.

Student Placement

When school leaders were asked about student placement options for students in varied disability categories, there is consistency among all respondents at a high rate of agreement. School leaders responded significantly (at the .05 level of confidence) with Agree to 14 out of 15 student placement questions. A notable exception was statement

forty-five, χ^2 (1) = 3.68, p = .0550688. Almost 6 out of every 10 (57.1%) school leaders agreed with the statement, "Students who have mild speech impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms; 42.9% of school leaders expressed disagreement." It should be noted here that preschool/developmental delay and developmental delay ages 3-5 were not included among the disability categories. The null hypothesis of no significant difference in school leaders responses' (agree, disagree) to survey items was accepted with respect to item 45, "Students who have mild speech impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms." The null hypothesis of no significant differences in school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) to survey items was rejected with respect to the remaining 14 student placement items. These findings are summarized in Table 7.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "What are school leaders' perceptions of inclusion relative to student rights and benefits, administrative support, curriculum, social development, academic achievement, and student placement?"

A descriptive approach rather than an inferential approach was used to address Research Question 2. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the six factors (subscales) of the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion*. The highest mean was for the Social Development subscale at 2.42 (*SD* =.69). The lowest mean was for Academic Achievement at 2.20 (*SD* = .84). The largest standard deviation was for Academic Achievement at .84. The larger standard deviation (spread in school leaders' ratings indicates greater disagreement about their views of academic achievement. As can be seen from an examination of Table 8, school leaders

have higher levels of agreement regarding social development, student placement, and academic achievement and less agreement with statements pertaining to students' rights and benefits, administrative support for inclusion, and the curriculum.

Table 7

Percentage of Responses to Research Question, "What Are School Leaders' Opinions Concerning Factors That Affect Implementation of the Inclusion Process as Suggested in the Current Literature?"

Rights and Benefits	Agree	Disagree
12. Children with special needs should have the right of access to public education programs.	97.9%	2.1%
13. Children with special needs should be provided with individual services.	94.8%	5.2%
14. Children with special needs should be educated in the least restrictive environment.	94.8%	5.2%
18. Students with special needs should be accommodated in a barrier-free environment.	92.7%	7.3%
19. Students with special needs are able to physically access the environment.	91.6%	8.4%
Administrative Support		
15. Categorical funding should be utilized to provide services to students with special needs in the regular education classroom.	95.2%	4.8%
16. In inclusive classrooms, per-pupil expenditures should be increased.	92.1%	7.9%

(table continues)

Table 7 (*continued*)

Administrative Support	Agree	Disagree
20. A variety of instructional materials that accommodate varied ability levels are present in the school or classroom or both.	91.6%	8.4%
Curriculum		
22. A regular curriculum at the regular complexity should be an option for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.	93.7%	6.3%
23. A regular curriculum at reduced levels of complexity should be an option for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.	94.9%	5.1%
26. Students with special needs will require most of the teacher's attention if placed in the regular classroom.	68.5%	31.5%
27. Significant modifications in the regular classroom procedures will be needed to accommodate students with special needs.	78.3%	21.3%
Social Development		
24. Students with special needs will be disruptive in regular classrooms.	63.3%	36.7%
28. Regular education students will become disruptive if taught in the classes with students with special needs.	58.2%	41.8%
Academic Achievement		
25. Students with special needs will experience difficulties in academic achievement if placed in the regular education classrooms.	69.7%	30.3%
29. Regular education students will fall behind academically if taught in classes with students with special needs.	59.9%	40.1%

(*table continues*)

Table 7 (*continued*)

Student Placement	Agree	Disagree
32. Students with mild learning disabilities should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	61.4%	38.6%
33. Students with moderate learning disabilities should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	73.1%	26.9%
34. Students with mild mental retardation should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	66.3%	33.7%
35. Students with moderate mental retardation should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	76.0%	24.0%
36. Students with severe mental retardation should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	88.8%	11.2%
37. Students with mild emotional behavior should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	67.2%	32.8%
38. Students with moderate emotional behavior should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	81.2%	18.8%
39. Students who are visually impaired should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	68.2%	31.8%
40. Students who are blind should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	79.3%	20.7%
41. Students with mild hearing impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	61.2%	38.8%
42. Students who are deaf should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	76.1%	23.9%
43. Students with orthopedic impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	68.7%	31.3%

(*table continues*)

Table 7 (*continued*)

Student Placement	Agree	Disagree
44. Students with other health impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	60.7%	39.3%
45. Students who have mild speech impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	57.1%	42.9%
47. Only students who have mild handicapping conditions should be placed in the regular education classroom.	73.0%	27.0%

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of the Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion

Variable	Mean ratings	Standard deviations	Sample size
Rights and benefits	1.60	.46	191
Administrative support	1.69	.48	191
Curriculum	1.91	.47	198
Social development	2.42	.69	197
Academic achievement	2.20	.84	197
Student placement	2.22	.68	198

Note. Higher scores indicate more favorable perceptions of factors that affect implementation of inclusion. Results were calculated using a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 2 = *disagree*, 3 = agree, 4 = *strongly agree*).

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, "Is there a significant relationship between school leaders' training in inclusion and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process?" Research Question 3 was addressed by testing the second null hypothesis:

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between school leaders' training in inclusion and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process.

This question was tested using the *t* test for difference in means. The means were collected from the school leaders' responses to the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion*. The mean score of school leaders with training in inclusion was compared with the mean score of school leaders with no training in inclusion to test for significance between the means. Means and standard deviations are shown in Table 9. An alpha level of .05 was utilized and significant differences were found between the means (see Table 10).

The results of the independent *t* tests indicated that opinions related to curriculum, social development, academic achievement, student placement and total attitude did not differ significantly between school leaders with training in inclusion and school leaders without training in inclusion.

Table 9

Mean Scores for Relationship between Training in Inclusion and Attitudes Concerning Factors That Affect Implementation of the Inclusion Process

Subscale	Training in inclusion	Mean scores	Standard deviations	Sample size
Student rights and benefits	Yes	1.50	.45	73
	No	1.67	.45	118
Administrative support	Yes	1.60	.49	73
	No	1.75	.46	118
Curriculum	Yes	1.91	.51	77
	No	1.91	.45	121
Social development	Yes	2.51	.71	77
	No	2.35	.67	120
Academic achievement	Yes	2.23	.92	77
	No	2.17	.79	120
Student placement	Yes	2.20	.65	77
	No	2.23	.70	121
Total attitude score	Yes	2.03	.49	77
	No	2.07	.45	121

Table 10

t Test for Relationship between Training in Inclusion and Attitudes Concerning Factors That Affect Implementation of the Inclusion Process

Subscale	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	*SE* difference
Student rights and benefits	-2.486	189	.014*	-.167400	.06732
Administrative support	-2.099	189	.037*	-.147600	.07031
Curriculum[a]	-.095	147	.925	-.006690	.07056
Social development	1.582	195	.115	.158800	.10040
Academic achievement[a]	.493	144	.623	.062930	.12770
Student placement	-.293	196	.770	-.029134	.09950
Total score	-.525	196	.600	-.035684	.06791

Note. [a]Equal variances not assumed. $p < .05$.

The *t*-test analysis revealed that opinions related to student rights and benefits ($p = .014$) and administrative support ($p = .037$) differed significantly between school leaders with training in inclusion and school leaders with no training in inclusion. Specifically, the mean student rights and benefits score of school leaders with no training in inclusion ($M = 1.67$, $SD = .45$) was significantly higher than the mean student rights and benefits score of school leaders with training in inclusion ($M = 1.50$, $SD = .45$). The mean administrative support score of school leaders with no training in inclusion ($M =$

1.75, SD = .48) was significantly higher than the mean administrative support score of leaders with no training in inclusion (M = 1.50, SD = .45).

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, "Is there a significant relationship between school leaders' training in special education and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process?" Research Question 4 was addressed by testing the third null hypothesis:

$H_0$3: There is no significant relationship between school leaders' training in special education and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process.

This question was tested using the t test for difference in means. The means were collected from the school leaders' responses to the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion*. The mean score of school leaders with training in special education was compared with the mean score of school leaders with no training in special education to test for significance between the means. Means and standard deviations are shown in Table 11. An alpha level of .05 was utilized and significant differences were found between the means (see Table 12).

The results of the independent t tests indicated that opinions related to curriculum, social development, academic achievement, student placement and total attitude did not differ significantly between school leaders with training in special education and school leaders without training in special education.

Table 11

Mean Scores for Relationship between Training in Special Education and Attitudes Concerning Factors That Affect Implementation of the Inclusion Process

Subscale	Training in inclusion	Mean scores	Standard deviations	Sample size
Student rights and benefits	Yes	1.47	.42	71
	No	1.68	.46	120
Administrative support	Yes	1.59	.44	71
	No	1.75	.49	120
Curriculum	Yes	1.85	.47	71
	No	1.94	.47	120
Social development	Yes	2.48	.72	71
	No	2.38	.67	126
Academic achievement	Yes	2.22	.97	71
	No	2.18	.77	126
Student placement	Yes	2.24	.73	71
	No	2.20	.51	127
Total attitude score	Yes	2.03	.51	71
	No	2.07	.44	127

Table 12

t Test for Relationship between Training in Special Education and Attitudes Concerning Factors That Affect Implementation of the Inclusion Process

Subscale	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	*SE* difference
Student rights and benefits	-3.210	189	.002*	-.2150	.0669
Administrative support	-2.313	189	.022*	-.1631	.0705
Curriculum	-1.377	196	.170	-.0956	.0694
Social development	.956	195	.340	.0979	.1024
Academic achievement[a]	.268	120	.789	.0357	.1337
Student placement	.406	196	.685	.0410	.1011
Total score[a]	-.602	128	.565	-.0416	.0720

Note. [a]Equal variances not assumed. $p < .05$.

The *t*-test analysis revealed that opinions related to student rights and benefits ($p = .002$) and administrative support ($p = .022$) differed significantly between school leaders with training in special education and school leaders with no training in special education. Specifically, the mean student rights and benefits score of school leaders with no training in special education ($M = 1.68$, $SD = .46$) was significantly higher than the mean student rights and benefits score of school leaders with training in special education ($M = 1.47$, $SD = .42$). The mean administrative support score of school leaders with no training in special education ($M = 1.75$, $SD = .49$) was significantly higher than the mean

administrative support score of school leaders with training in special education (M = 1.59, SD = .44).

Ancillary Findings

A total of 207 public school leaders were participants in this study. Mean scores of the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* were computed for gender of school leader.

Table 13 provides the summary information on the *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* according to school leader gender for the research sample. Male school leaders rated student rights and benefits, administrative support of inclusion, and total (overall) perception higher than their female counterparts. Female school leaders rated curriculum higher than male school leaders. Both male and female school leaders rated social development, academic achievement, and student placement similarly.

Summary

Chapter V presented the description of the sample, reliability analysis of the study instrument, and the results of the data analysis of the study of school leaders' perceptions of factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process. Statistics revealed that there was a significant relationship between school leaders' perceptions of factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process and their training in inclusion and training in special education. Mean scores for factors that affect implementation of inclusion were computed for school leaders' gender.

Table 13

Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion Mean Scores by Teacher Gender

Gender	Subscale	Mean scores	Standard deviations	Sample size
Male	Student rights and benefits	3.25	.45	85
	Administrative support	3.67	.46	85
	Curriculum	3.00	.48	87
	Social development	4.00	.57	86
	Academic achievement	4.00	.74	86
	Student placement	4.00	.60	87
	Total score	3.50	.46	87
Female	Student rights and benefits	2.50	.45	106
	Administrative support	3.00	.47	106
	Curriculum	3.50	.46	111
	Social development	4.00	.74	111
	Academic achievement	4.00	.87	111
	Student placement	4.00	.72	111
	Total score	3.13	.46	111

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations. The purpose of the study was to explore perceptions of school leaders (administrators, teachers, counselors, other) regarding inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom. An additional purpose of the study was to examine the influence of training, experience, and selected demographic variables (gender, age, highest degree) on school leaders' perceptions of inclusion.

The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are school leaders' opinions concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process as suggested in the current literature?
2. What are school leaders' perceptions of inclusion relative to student rights and benefits, administrative support, curriculum, social development, academic achievement, and student placement?
3. Is there a significant relationship between school leaders' training in special education and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process?

4. Is there a significant relationship between school leaders' training in inclusion and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process?

The target population for this study was all middle and high school leaders (principals, assistant principals, instructional liaison specialists, counselors) in a single school district. The final sample consisted of 111 administrators, 67 teachers, 17 counselors, and 12 other certified teaching staff.

The study utilized Harris' (1997) *Survey of Perceptions of Factors That Affect Implementation of Full Inclusion* to determine school leaders' perceptions of factors that affect implementation of inclusion. The One Variable Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test, descriptive statistics, and the *t* test for differences in means to test were employed to answer three research questions. Statistical significance was established at the .05 level of probability.

Findings

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "What are school leaders' opinions concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process as suggested in the current literature?" This research question was addressed by testing the following null hypothesis: There is no difference between school leaders' responses (agree, disagree) to survey items ($H_0 1$: $O_{Agree} = O_{Disagree}$).

The data suggested that there were significant differences between school leaders' responses to survey items. When the responses to 31 questions were analyzed, 30 were

found to be statistically significant. School leaders perceived (with at least 58% agreement):

- Children with special needs should have the right of access to public education programs.
- Children with special needs should be provided with individual services.
- Children with special needs should be educated in the least restrictive environment.
- Children with special needs should be accommodated in a barrier-free environment.
- Children with special needs are able to physically access the environment
- Categorical funding should be utilized to provide services to students with special needs in the regular education classroom.
- In inclusive classrooms, per-pupil expenditure should be increased.
- A variety of instructional materials that accommodate varied ability levels are present in the school or classrooms or both.
- A regular curriculum at the regular complexity should be an option for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.
- A regular curriculum at reduced levels of complexity should be an option for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.
- Students with special needs will require most of the teacher's attention if placed in the regular classroom.

- Significant modifications in the regular classroom procedures will be needed to accommodate students with special needs.
- Students with special needs will be disruptive in regular classrooms.
- Regular education students will become disruptive if taught in the classes with students with special needs.
- Students with special needs will experience difficulties in academic achievement if placed in the regular education classrooms.
- Regular education students will fall behind academically if taught in classes with students with special needs.
- Students with mild learning disabilities should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students with moderate disabilities should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students with mild mental retardation should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students with moderate mental retardation should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students with severe mental retardation should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students with mild emotional behavior should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.

- Students with moderate emotional behavior should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students who are visually impaired should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students who are blind should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students with mild hearing impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students who are deaf should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students with orthopedic impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Students with other health impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.
- Only students who have mild handicapping conditions should be placed in regular education classrooms.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "What are school leaders' perceptions of inclusion relative to student rights and responsibilities, administrative support, the curriculum, social development, academic achievement, and student placement?" When mean ranked, school leaders have higher levels of agreement regarding social development, student placement, and academic achievement and less agreement with statements pertaining to

students' rights and responsibilities, administrative support for inclusion, and the curriculum.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, "Does school leaders' training in inclusion impact their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process?" Research Question 3 was addressed by testing the following hypotheses:

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between school leaders' training in inclusion and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process.

$H_0$3: There is no significant relationship between school leaders' training in special education and their attitudes concerning factors that affect implementation of the inclusion process.

Hypothesis 2 was rejected with respect to student rights and benefits and administrative support. School leaders with no training in inclusion had significantly higher student rights and benefits and administrative support scores than school leaders with training in inclusion.

Hypothesis 3 was rejected with respect to student rights and benefits and administrative support. School leaders with no training in special education had significantly higher student rights and benefits and administrative support scores than school leaders with training in special education.

Conclusions

The researcher found some unanimity in school leaders' perceptions of factors that affect implementation of inclusion. School leaders had higher levels of agreement with statements regarding social development, student placement, and academic achievement and less agreement with statements pertaining to students' rights and benefits, administrative support for inclusion, and the curriculum. School leaders were more willing to include students with mild disabilities than students with more severe disabilities. This finding is in agreement with Soodak et al. (1998).

Surprisingly, school leaders with no training in inclusion and no training in special education (compared with school leaders with training in inclusion and training in special education) had a somewhat better attitude toward the rights of students with disabilities and the resources and support needed in inclusive classrooms. This finding is not consistent with the findings of Petersen and Beloin (1998), which suggest that the number and type of courses taken by special and general educators influence their acceptance of inclusion.

Implications

The findings of the numerous studies detailing the benefits of inclusion have not suggested that inclusion is the key to making special education and regulation equitable for all students. School systems should not view general education classrooms as the least restrictive environment for all students, regardless of disability and teacher preparation. Inclusion should be based on each student's needs and adequate in-service training designed to prepare teachers for working with students with disabilities. The

U.S. Supreme Court cautioned in *Daniel R. v. State Board of Education* (1989) and *Sacramento City Unified School District v. Holland* (1992) that determination of the appropriateness of inclusive education should be based on (a) whether the student will receive little or no benefit from inclusion because of the nature and severity of the disability, and (b) on whether the education of other students in the classroom will be affected by the student's disruptive behavior.

Recommendations

Recommendations must be considered in relation to the inherent limitations of the study. Data presented were self-reported.

It is recommended that school districts offer in-service training and information sharing workshops, which focus on legal aspects of special education and teaching strategies for students with disabilities.

The finding of significant differences in perceptions of students' rights and administrative support for inclusion between school leaders with training in inclusion and special education and school leaders without training in inclusion and special education suggest that further research is warranted.

Finally, further research should expand the sampling frame–survey school leaders from a larger geographical area.

Summary

The findings of the present study have been summarized in Chapter VI. Conclusions and implications based on the present study have been given. Recommendations for additional and future research have been outlined.

APPENDIX A

A SURVEY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT AFFECT IMPLEMENTATION OF FULL INCLUSION

This survey is divided into two sections. Section I addresses demographic data, while Section II addresses inclusion in your school. Please answer all items in each section using the response mode given. Note that all responses will be reported as group data and, therefore, respondent anonymity will be ensured. Thank you for your participation.

Section I: Demographic Data

1. Gender:
   _____ Male _____ Female

2. Age:
   _____ 21-25 _____ 26-30
   _____ 31-35 _____ 36-40
   _____ 41-45 _____ 46-50
   _____ 51-55 _____ over 55

3. Years of Teaching Experience (Check one):
   _____ 1- 3 _____ 4-7
   _____ 8-11 _____ 12-15
   _____ 16-20 _____ 21-25
   _____ 26-30 _____ over 30

4. Highest Level of Educational Attainment (Check one):
   _____ Bachelor _____ Master
   _____ Specialist _____ Doctorate

5. Certification (Check one):
   _____ Administration _____ Special Education
   _____ Secondary Ed. _____ Other (Specify): _____

6. Your Current Position:
   _____ Administrator _____ Teacher
   _____ Counselor _____ Other (Specify): _____

7. Have you had training in special education?
   ____ Yes _____ No

APPENDIX A (*Continued*)

8. Have you had special training in working with the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom?
   _____ Yes _____ No

Section II: Inclusion

Inclusion is defined as teaching students who have identified intellectual, emotional, physical, or learning disabilities in the regular education class along with their non-disabled peers by delivering the necessary supports to them rather than pulling them out of the regular classroom for instruction.

Directions: Please respond to all items that best describe your school.

9. Special education classes in my school are (Check all that apply):
   _____ Strategically located throughout the building
   _____ Located together in close proximity to the regular education classes
   _____ Located in a separate wing of the building
   _____ Do not exist; all students with disabilities are fully integrated into regular education classes

10. Check all related services programs provided at your school:
    _____ Adapted physical education
    _____ Mobility training
    _____ Speech and language therapy
    _____ Occupational therapy
    _____ Behavioral specialist
    _____ Counseling
    _____ Other (Specify): _____

11. Check all special education programs available at your school:
    _____ Mild intellectual disabled
    _____ Moderate intellectual disabled
    _____ Severe intellectual disabled
    _____ Specific learning disabled
    _____ Emotional behavioral disabled
    _____ Interrelated
    _____ Visual disabled
    _____ Hearing impaired
    _____ Orthopedically impaired
    _____ Other health impaired

APPENDIX A (*Continued*)

For questions 12-47, use the following response choices:

1 = Strongly Agree 3 = Disagree

2 = Agree 4 = Strongly Disagree

12. Children with special needs should have the right of access to public education programs.	1 2 3 4
13. Children with special needs should be provided with individual services.	1 2 3 4
14. Children with special needs should be educated in the least restrictive environment.	1 2 3 4
15. Categorical funding should be utilized to provide services to students with special needs in the regular education classroom	1 2 3 4
16. In inclusive classrooms, per-pupil expenditures should be increased.	1 2 3 4
17. The state funding system should tie state special education allocations to the locations where services are provided.	1 2 3 4
18. Students with special needs should be accommodated in a barrier-free environment.	1 2 3 4
19. Students with special needs are able to physically access the environment.	1 2 3 4
20. A variety of instructional materials that accommodate varied ability levels are present in the school and/or classroom.	1 2 3 4
21. Students with special needs in the inclusive classroom should progress systematically through a clearly identified course of study.	1 2 3 4
22. A regular curriculum at the regular complexity should be an option for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.	1 2 3 4
23. A regular curriculum at reduced levels of complexity should be an option for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.	1 2 3 4
24. Students with special needs will be disruptive in regular classrooms.	1 2 3 4

APPENDIX A (*Continued*)

1 = Strongly Agree 3 = Disagree
2 = Agree 4 = Strongly Disagree

25. Students with special needs will experience difficulties in academic achievement if placed in the regular education classrooms	1	2	3	4
26. Students with special needs will require most of the teacher's attention if placed in the regular classroom.	1	2	3	4
27. Significant modifications in the regular classroom procedures will be needed to accommodate students with special needs	1	2	3	4
28. Regular education students will become disruptive if taught in the classes with students with special needs.	1	2	3	4
29. Regular education students will fall behind academically if taught in classes with students with special needs.	1	2	3	4
30. Regular education students who have students with disabilities in their classroom will be motivated to achieve academically.	1	2	3	4
31. Regular education students will develop friendships with students with special needs if taught in the regular classroom.	1	2	3	4
32. Students with mild learning disabilities should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
33. Students with moderate learning disabilities should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
34. Students with mild mental retardation should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
35. Students with moderate mental retardation should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
36. Students with severe mental retardation should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
37. Students with mild emotional behavior should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX A (*Continued*)

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Disagree
4 = Strongly Disagree

38. Students with moderate emotional behavior should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
39. Students who are visually impaired should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
40. Students who are blind should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
41. Students with mild hearing impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
42. Students who are deaf should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
43. Students who are orthopedically impaired should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
44. Students who have other health impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
45. Students who have mild speech impairments should not be placed in full-time regular education classrooms.	1	2	3	4
46. All students, regardless of handicapping conditions, should be educated in the regular classroom.	1	2	3	4
47. Only students who have mild handicapping conditions should be placed in the regular classroom.	1	2	3	4

Appendix B

Approval Letter

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

RESEARCH PLANNING AND
ACCOUNTABILITY DEPARTMENT
222 PRYOR STREET, S.W.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30335
(404) 827-8091
FAX (404) 827-8352

Focus on Student Success

May 29, 2003

Mr. Marcus A. Barber, Assistant Principal
Southside High School
801 Glenwood Avenue, S.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30312

Dear Mr. Barber:

Your request to conduct research within the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) was reviewed by the Research Screening Committee in accordance with the guidelines. Your research study entitled "The Perceptions of Middle and High School Leaders Toward the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs in the Regular Classroom Environment and the Impact of Those Perceptions on Teacher Classroom Practice" was approved under the following conditions:

1. Your research design includes a survey to be completed by middle and high school administrators regarding their perceptions of inclusion procedures for special needs students in their schools. You should plan to distribute your survey, along with a cover letter and a self-addressed return envelope, through the U. S. Mail.
2. APS staff members can participate in your research study **only** on a voluntary basis.
3. Activities related to your research study must not interfere with the instructional program or with the state and local testing programs.
4. The confidentiality of students, teachers, principals, other APS staff members, the schools, and the school system must be ensured. Pseudonyms for people and the schools, as well as references to APS as "a large urban school system," are required in the title and text of your final report before publication or presentation outside of APS.
5. The data collection phase of your research study must be completed by the end of the 2003-2004 school year.
6. If changes are made in the research design or in the instruments used, you must notify the Department of Research, Planning, and Accountability prior to beginning your study.

This letter serves as official notification of the approval of your proposed research study, pending the above conditions. **Remember that a copy of the results of your completed study must be submitted to the Department of Research, Planning, and Accountability.** Please contact me at (404) 827-8186 if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Nancy J. Emmons

Nancy J. Emmons, Ph.D.
Research Associate

NJE:lf - #3612

xc: Dr. Sharron Hunt
Middle and High School Principals

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER TO SURVEY

December 30, 2003

Dear Principal:

My name is Marcus A. Barber. Currently, I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership at Clark Atlanta University and the Principal of Richard N. Fickett Elementary School. My dissertation topic is *Perceptions of School Leaders of Factors That Affect Implementation of the Inclusion Process in Selected Middle and High Schools.*

As a part of my study, I will need your assistance in completing and distributing the attached surveys. Please complete a copy of the survey and distribute the remaining surveys to your assistant principal(s), department chairs, supervisor(s)/coordinator(s), and registrar(s). If additional surveys are needed, please make the necessary copies. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete each survey. The information reported by the school leaders will remain confidential and will not identify the person or the school. The information derived from the study may reveal significant implications of your perceptions and practices regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom environment.

Please return the surveys to the researcher in the self-addressed stamped envelope enclosed with this letter by Friday, January 30, 2004. If e-mail is more accommodating for your staff, you are more than welcome to send your preference to the researcher at mbarber@atlanta.k12.ga.us or to marcusbarber@msn.com and request the survey template. To obtain a copy of the research or to address any concern, you may contact the researcher at (404) 346-2357, (404) 472-9617 or at the aforementioned e-mail addresses.

Thank you in advance for your time, consideration and cooperation with this research project.

Sincerely,

Marcus A. Barber

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